

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 06953 202217Z

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 356

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EAGR UR

SUBJ: GROWING SOVIET CONCERN ABOUT FOREST FIRES

1. AS MOSCOW'S EARLY, WARM DRY SPRING HAS REMINDED SOVIETS OF 1972 WEATHER CONDITIONS, SO IT HAS ALSO AWAKENED CONCERN THAT BRUSH AND PEAT BOG FIRES COMMON DURING SUMMER OF 1972 MAY RECUR THIS YEAR. ALTHOUGH SOIL MOISTURE CHARTS RECEIVED FROM DEPT OF AGRICULTURE DO NOT INDICATE EXCEPTIONALLY DRY CONDITIONS, LOWER THAN AVERAGE RAINFALL LOCALLY IN PAST MONTH HAS VISIBLY INTESIFIED DANGER OF FIRES IN COUNTRYSIDE. REMARKS DROPPED BY SOVIET GUESTS AT RECEPTIONS HAVE BEGUN TO REFLECT GROWING APPREHENSION ABOUT POTENTIAL FIRE HAZARDS IN FORESTS NORTH AND EAST OF MOSCOW, AND EMBOFF TRAVELLING BY AUTOMOBILE TO SUZDAL MAY 18 NOTED EXTENSIVE USE OF TRUCK-MOUNTED SPRINKLER SYSTEMS. USA INSTITUTE OFFICIAL HAS ALSO TOLD US THAT ALL SUSCH SYSTEMS AVAILABLE IN THE AREA (HE DID NOT SEPCIFY EXTENT OF AREA) HAVE BEEN CALLED INTO USE. RECENT MOSCOW AREA PRESS (E.G., LENINSKOYE ZNAMYA, 17, 18 MAY 1975) HAS FEATURED EXTENSIVE USE OF WATER PUMPING AND SPRINKLING EQUIPMENT AND WIDESPREAD WATERING OF PLANTINGS AND PARKS CAN BE SEEN IN MOSCOW NOW.

2. OFFICIAL CONCERN OVER CURRENT DRY SPELL AND DANGER OF FIRES LED MOSCOW OBLAST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO CLOSE THE FOREST IN EIGHT RAYONS (SHATURSKIY, PAVLOVO-POSADSKIY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 06953 202217Z

YEGOR'YEVSKIY, NOGINSKIY, LUKHOVITSKIY, OREKHOVO-ZUYEVSKIY,

DMITROVSKIY, RAMENSKIY) ON MAY 13 TO HUNTERS, FISHERMAN, PICNICKERS, AND ALL VISITORS IN GENERAL. PATROLS ARE CHECKING WOODS AND PONDS NEARBY FOR VISITORS AND LEVYING TEN-RUBLE FINES FOR LIGHTING FIRES. THIS INFORMATION APPEARS IN MAY 20 EDITION OF LENINSKOYE ZNAMYA, THE MOSCOW OBLAST NEWSPAPER. MAY 19 ISSUE OF IZVESTIYA CARRIES INTERVIEW BY GENERAL F. OBUKHOV, CHIEF OF FIRE SERVICE OF MVD USSR, WHO SAID THAT THERE ARE NUMEROUS FOREST FIRES, ESPECIALLY IN THE WARMEST AND DRIEST AREAS--THE CENTRAL OBLASTS OF THE RSFSR, THE VOLGA VALLEY, AND THE URALS. HE CITED A FIRE OUTSIDE KURSK WHICH WAS HALTED ONLY 30 METERS FROM THE CITY LINE. PRAVDA'S WEATHER ARTICLE ON MAY 19 NOTED THE HIGH TEMPERATURES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN REGIONS OF EUROPEAN USSR ARE CLOSE TO THE RECORD FOR THE FIRST HALF OF MAY, AND THAT PROLONGED HIGH TEMPERATURES ARE THE WORST IN THE LAST 100 YEARS

3. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING TELEGRAPHICALLY ANY LONG AND/OR MEDIUM-RANGE WEATHER FORECASTS FOR AREAS OF USSR WHICH DEPT. MAY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE.
MATLOCK

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